

# UPSTAIRS CLUB

Volume 4.

October 18, 1962

Chicago, Illinois An Educational Group

## AUTUMN

Listen! the wind is rising,  
And the air is wild with leaves,  
We have had our summer evenings,  
Now for October eves!

Humbert Wolfe.

The fall dance season began brilliantly with the enchanting Ballet Folklorice of Mexico at the Opera House. No attempt was made to be spectacular - it was simply performed and presented with impeccable taste with some of the loveliest costumes ever seen on a stage. What a pity we did not have the chance to see the Indian boy Jorge Tyller, dance his "deer dance" a second time... it is bound to be one of the high spots of the entire season ... the coming season is to be much too crowded for comfort with visiting Ballet companies... with the Nureyev-Arova and Chicago Opera Ballet Gala performance... the Bolshoi - Uday Shankar - the Roumanian National Folk Festival - the Foo Hsing

Theatre group - Jose Greco - and finally at Christmas time The American Ballet

Theatre... all much too crowded for any activity from our local groups. Opera rehearsals are at the hectic point at this writing... CHARLES SCHICK and DOLORES LIPINSKI are again soloists with SHARON LUNDIN, PAULA PERRINE, JEAN MOYER and ANN BRADFORD in the corps... among others augmented for the special performances are ELIZABETH WINEBERG, SANDRA LEMLEY, STEVE PRIMIS, MICHAEL GAVIN, PAUL KRUMM and JOHN SPINA... much news has come to our attention since the last Bulletin which may have happened before it came out because our news often comes via the grapevine... born on July 26th - PATRICK JOSEPH CUMMINGS in Ridgeland, New Jersey to PAT & JUDY CUMMINGS... FATHER WALSH & JOHN NEUMEIER spent most of the summer in Europe where they reproduced the "Coventry Mystery Cycle Plays" in Mainz Germany... JOHN is still in Europe but no news of what he is doing... SHEILA REILLY had another fling at Europe after her hard summer at Interlochen with the National Music Camp...

the presentation of her ballet at the White House in early August was a huge success and an occasion for all those involved to remember for a long time... ELLEVA JEAN DAVIDSON turned up in the group after two or more years away from dance nursing a bad knee-operation... acquired from her passion for Cheer leading... nothing for anyone who ever hopes to dance to be doing... and yet they all have a fling at it... the Summer Theatres had many SC dancers this year... CHARLES SCHICK, COLLEEN KELLY, BEVERLEY LACEK and PATRICK BOSS were among the regulars at Music Theatre... RAYMOND ROITMAN and SHELLY BERMAN joined for "West Side Story" .. DONNA MILLER played the leading ingenue part in Joan Bennet's play which toured as far east as New York state... BARBARA RUBENSTEIN played in summer theatres in New England and BASIL CROSS played leads out in Michigan ... KAREN KRYCH left at the end of August to rejoin Ballet Theatre ... She will be in the Erik Bruhn - Carla Fracci broadcast on the next Telephone Hour program... RUTH ANN KOESUN & JOHN KRIZA left for New York around the middle of September... JOHN will have a busy year dancing "Fancy Free" on a tour to be billed as a "Leonard Bernstein Gala Evening"... this is not to conflict with the Ballet Theatre tour... BETTE MARIE KILBRIDE was married September 15th to Lt. John May of the U.S. Air Force... we heard also that GORDANA ARSENEYVICH was also married during the summer... JUANITA GARBER was taking her second plunge Oct. 13th... WILLIAM SOMMERS was through Chicago on his way to Minneapolis where he is to work... he had just returned from six months research in Rhodesia combined with a tour through the orient... NORMAN EDWARDS of the old Grand days recently left the Juliet Prowse show in Las Vegas to work on a film in Japan... GILDO DI NUNZIO was home for a week after working in the movie "Bye Bye Birdie" and with Chita Rivera in a west coast production of "West Side Story" ... he is on his way to New York to begin rehearsals

in the new Judy Holliday show "Hot Spot" ... we read that JOHN SHARPE is to be in "Little Me" another new musical ...

#### FROM A DANCER'S SCRAPBOOK

Our Bodies are our glory, our hazard and our care. -Martha Graham

No matter where this body is, the mind is free to go elsewhere.

-Wm. Henry Davies

Every man is the builder of a temple - called his body. -Thoreau

Naught cared this body for wind or weather  
When youth and I lived in it together.

Coleridge

They found that even the Belly, in its dull quiet way, was doing necessary work for the body, and that all must work together or the body will go to pieces. -Aesop

Taine pointed out that history was made by men and that men had bodies, that bodies were now healthy, now disordered, and that the state of the mind inevitably affected the action of the mind. The study of the Human body was part of the historians duty. The accidents of health had more to do with the march of great events than was ordinarily suspected.

-Laurens Fisher

This being of mine, whatever it really is, consists of a little flesh, a little breath, and the part that governs.

-Marcus Aurelius

Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor,  
For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich.

-Shakespeare

My body, eh. Friend Death, how now?  
Why all this tedious pomp of writ?  
Thou has reclaimed it sure and slow  
For half a century, bit by bit.

-Helen Hunt Jackson

For as I like a young man in whom there is something of the old, so I like an old man in whom there is something of the young; and he who follows this maxim in body will possibly be an old man but he will never be an old man in mind.

-Cicero

And yet another PATRICK ... this time to WINI and PAUL BOKOR on October the 3rd ....

#### CHINESE DRAMA:

The following excerpts are from an old program of Mei Lan-Fang's who toured the United States during the '20s. Mei Lan-Fang, born in 1893 made his first professional debut at the age of 12 as a tan, or impersonator of female roles. His art combined the arts of acting, singing and dancing. He was a favorite of the Royal Courts in his day and died not too long ago in a much changed China.

"The bareness of the Chinese stage relieved by an embroidered curtain and a few tables and chairs, makes severe demands on the attainments of the actor. When a character in the role of a general comes to a sudden pause at the front of the stage, the white silk pompoms of his hat aquiver, his embroidered coat sweeping down between his carefully poised legs and his fingers clasped tightly about a white-shafted spear, the bareness of the stage would emphasize and exaggerate any lack of grace or muscular control.

It follows that an artist of first degree by means of pantomime, singing and recitation can convert a bare stage into a moonlight garden, the entrance to a temple, a field of battle, or whatever place the text of the play requires. The art of the actor must be supreme and the audience not infrequently goes to see and to hear him rather than the drama.

Actors, according to their physical and vocal gifts, strive to perfect themselves in one special, conventionalized stage type, among which may be mentioned the operatic heroine, the old woman, the operatic hero, the warrior, the comedian, etc. The best artists of each type are assured of regular employment and sometimes national fame and wealth.

With the rarest exception, nothing contributes to realistic effect. On the contrary, everything tends to remove the spectator from the drab of life, no opportunity being lost to delight the ear and eye. Voice, gesture, costume are subservient to beauty and convention. The wrapping of a long sleeve about the wrist may heighten the tensity of a song,

which itself is one degree higher in emotional expression than rhythmic recitation.

Here one finds a marvelous blending of the arts of the playhouse; singing recitation, pantomime, dancing combining to form a harmonious whole. Music punctuates speech, accentuates posture and sets the pace for battle.

The imagination is given full rein on the unlocalized stage where the characters unbolt and push open imaginary doors and are separated by unseen walls. To the Chinese audience, a whip to represent a horse or a mere word to suggest an orchard, is just as real as an elaborate setting is to a New York audience.

If sex has been a matter for lively discussion in the west, it has also made a deep impression on the Chinese Theatre. On the stage itself, men impersonate women, as is done in Java and Japan. The Emperor Ch'ien Lung (1736-95) banished women from the professional stage; and although they have gradually returned since the Republic (1911), they have with rare exception, proved no match for men in the highly stylized acting and singing of feminine roles. Women in order to hold the public are obliged to imitate the leading male exponents of feminine art, who, in the beginning, devised the falsetto and conventional manner to imitate real women.

Music plays an exceedingly important part as is proved by the phrases; an actor sings a play and goes to hear a drama. A Character speaks until his emotions become raised to a certain pitch when he proceeds to express himself in song, a practice believed to have been true in ancient Greek drama.

Ethics and religion people the stage with distinct types of characters. Confucian ethics champion filial piety, loyalty of friend to friend, devotion of servant to master. Thus, a servant will place his own child in death's jaws to save the infant crown prince.

Buddhism supplies the stage with laughable nuns and lazy, often immoral, monks and provides many temple scenes: Taoism furnished a veritable pantheon of demigods, fairies and supernatural animals. Just as the forces blend harmoniously in the everyday life of the people so do they jointly contribute a distinctive colour to the theatre.

The Chinese dramatist who delights in teaching a moral lesson often goes to what may appeal unreasonable lengths to reward good and to punish evil. Heroic feats in battle, the faithfulness of a minister to his sovereign, the fidelity of a wife in adverse circumstances - these and similar qualities are glorified, while villainy and meanness come in for their full share of ridicule and scathing censure. Variations of these favourite themes are common. For instance, the story of a husband who has been away for eighteen to twenty years and returns to test the faithfulness of his wife, may be seen in no less than three plays, any of which may be presented in leading playhouses several times a year.

From the foregoing it is plain that realism is shunned and in its place is to be found a lightness of touch, markedly impressionistic and enhanced by music, metre, rhythmic gesture and expressive posture, which combine to produce a stylized beauty denuded of the commonplace. As in Chinese painting, the playwright strives to achieve his effect with an economy of line, going straight to his idea by brushing aside time, geographical and scenic considerations.

Here the surface only of a rich field has been scratched; there is no space to consider the suppression and return of actresses, the training schools for boys, the metamorphosis of the stage from the platform with its lacquer columns and roof to the present picture-frame type and a host of other phases.

It is desirable to conclude with one main thought; while the Chinese drama does not hold up the mirror to present

day life, realistically depicted, it offers something far more precious, namely, what the millions in the great oriental republic enjoy now, have enjoyed for centuries and will enjoy for years to come.

(Keep in your mind that this was written some 40 or more years ago and may not apply to the present day China).

Peoples of other countries think it strange that in the Chinese drama men have, until very recently, portrayed the feminine roles though this would not have seemed strange to Europeans in the age of Shakespeare. This is, indeed, an outstanding characteristic of oriental drama. The playing of female parts by young men was inevitable, because in the old social system of China, the strictest barrier between the sexes was maintained and because the appearance of women on the stage was absolutely forbidden by public opinion. In the old Chinese drama a large number of plays are of the following types: "sorrow-gladness", "separation-reunion", and tales of love. If a man and a woman were to reproduce on the stage a love scene, they would invite upon their unfortunate heads an avalanche of public censure. Nevertheless, since the drama could not exist without a female character, there was no course except to train handsome young men to impersonate the other sex. If, then, men did not impersonate women, there would be no means of carrying forward the plot of the play.

It is obvious that the tan occupies the most important position on the Chinese stage.

## REMARKS on Mei Lan-Fang's expressiveness.

## THE FACE

Mei's quiet facial expressions and his intelligent use of the same may be compared with the adaptability of running water, which, placed in a square receptacle is square; when put in a basin, round.

## THE HEAD

A head, stiff in movement is like a wooden puppet. When an actor is on the

stage, he must keep his head in constant but barely perceptible motion before, that part of the body is, according to stage conventions, considered properly animated. Others who imitate Mei's head movements quiver as clumsily as the metal rings on a leather drum!

## THE NECK

A head that does not move with ease speaks of a very poorly trained and stiff neck. Mei is famous for the graceful manner in which he moves his neck.

## THE EYES

The merits of Mei's eyes lie in their expressions of joy, anger, and sorrow; even before these emotions have been revealed, his eyes mirror those feelings beforehand. When there is no special emotion to express, he manages his eyes so that they perfectly express the situation.

## THE SHOULDERS

Although the shoulders are a mark of true beauty, still, when Mr. Mei portrayed the role of the warrior in "Mulan in the Army", his shoulders did not slope at all in feminine grace, but were raised high in virile strength.

## THE HANDS

Fair they are, but their main charm lies not in their fairness alone, but in their exquisite softness. His fingers taper to dainty points, while his wrists are the joy of all connoisseurs.

THE WAIST

Mr. Tse-Ch'ing once said; "Everyone knows of the beauty of Mei's stage gait, but who knows that much of his grace lies in the use of his waist? Sheer beauty lies in his waist, which stands strong and erect like a pavilion on a mountainside. He is like a sail, fluttering in the brisk breeze, his feet moving in dainty animation. All of this would be impossible without a perfectly controlled waist. This particular accomplishment was heavensent, a gift not to be learned, but which was improved by assiduous practice.